

6.0 COORDINATION AND CONSULTATION

Caltrans has coordinated the Route 905 project with the appropriate Federal, State, and local agencies, as well as interested citizens. This early coordination effort is described below.

NOTICE OF PREPARATION/ NOTICE OF INTENT

On February 28, 1995, a Notice of Preparation (NOP) was distributed to appropriate State and local agencies and organizations. On March 30, 1995, a Notice of Intent (NOI) was published in the Federal Register in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Copies of the NOP and NOI are included as [Figure 6-1](#) and [Figure 6-2](#).

Comments on the NOP were received from:

- The California Department of Fish and Game requesting a complete comprehensive study of biological resources,
- The California Native Plant Society expressing concern for impacts to botanical resources,
- San Ysidro School District, and Sweetwater Union High School District, informing Caltrans of planned schools in the project area,
- San Diego Archaeological Society, requesting a copy of the Cultural Resources Technical Study and DEIS/R,
- Otay Water District, requesting that impacts to water systems and pipelines be addressed.

Comments on the NOI were received from:

- The National Park Service, requesting that impacts to Otay Valley Regional Park be addressed, and that an air quality study address possible increases in pollution,
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), expressing concern that impacts to sensitive species, vernal pools, and the Multiple Species Conservation Program be addressed.
- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), requesting that the DEIS adequately address the project purpose and need, project alternatives, impacts to the environment (direct, indirect, and cumulative), noise, air quality and water quality impacts, and the issue of environmental justice.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

In December 1993, US. Congressman Bob Filner convened the Otay Mesa Transportation Summit, a meeting of elected officials representing the Otay Mesa area. Briefings from Federal, State and local officials as well as from the public were received. More than 125 people attended, an indication of the level of local interest and concern.

Since 1993, on-going meetings have taken place with several community groups such as the Citizens for Route 905/ Citizens for Border Transportation, the South County Economic Development Corporation Transportation Infrastructure Advisory Committee, and the Otay Mesa

Chamber of Commerce. Councilman Juan Vargas, City of San Diego, and his staff, as well as business community members, have been involved in project update meetings also.

A public scoping meeting was held on April 10, 1995, to gather information from the public regarding concerns and issues in the study area, and help set the scope of the environmental studies. Written comments from the attendees supported the project. Members of the California Transportation Commission (CTC) have been involved in supporting the proposed project. On September 19, 1997, a CTC tour of Route 905 and Otay Mesa took place.

On September 25, 1997, a public information meeting was held to give the community an opportunity to review and comment about the proposed project. No opposition to the project was recorded. However, some landowners adjacent to the proposed alignment voiced concerns about potential adverse economic impacts to their properties. Generally, there is support for the project from citizens, agencies and organizations. A letter of support from the Endangered Habitats League is included as [Figure 6-6](#).

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT TEAM

A multi-disciplinary Project Development Team (PDT) was formed in 1995, including representatives from other interested agencies. The members are:

FHWA: Jeff Lewis

Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS): Susan Wynn/ Jacalyn Fleming

Metropolitan Transit Development Board: Bob Robenhymer

SANDAG: Eric Pahlke/ George Franck

California Highway Patrol: Captain Norton

U. S. Border Patrol: Ray Ortega

City of San Diego: Larry Van Wey/ Gretchen Softley/ Kerry Santoro

Caltrans:

Ray Traynor/ Rick Hopkins (Project Manager)

Chuck Davis/ Dave Walcott/ Jose Luis Gomez/ Waldo Lopez (Design)

John Chisholm (Environmental Division)

Jason Reynolds (Environmental Division)

Tim Craggs (Office of Project Planning and Design)

Tom Ham/ Roch Scouton (Landscape Architecture)

Bill Figge (Planning)

Dick Coward/ Fred Yazdan (Traffic Operations)

Janet Schaffer (Right of Way)

Cid Tesoro/ Karen Jewel (Hydraulics/ NPDES)

Steve Saville/ Jim Larson (Public Affairs)

Other agencies invited to participate as members of the PDT were EPA, California Department of Fish and Game (DFG), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE), and County of San Diego; these agencies are informed of any PDT matters, minutes of meetings, etc. The first meeting was held on August 3, 1995. Caltrans, the City of San Diego, and the County of San Diego worked closely as

partners in the development of the consultant studies. The PDT will hold meetings at regular intervals to guide the development of the project.

COORDINATION WITH RESOURCE AND REGULATORY AGENCIES

Considerable coordination has occurred with the resource and regulatory agencies throughout the environmental study process. Caltrans has worked closely with representatives of these agencies. In addition to numerous telephone calls and letters regarding various aspects of the project, the following meetings were held:

- May 11, 1995 – meeting with FWS, COE, and DFG regarding alternatives for study.
- June 15, 1995 – Pre-application meeting for 404 permit, with representatives of COE, EPA, FWS, DFG, and County of San Diego. Agency representatives agreed that the three alternative alignments proposed were sufficient for study and the EIS/R.
- September 19, 1995 – discussion with COE, FWS, and DFG regarding the MSCP corridor and biological impacts for each alternative. No new alternatives were suggested.
- March 19, 1997 – discussion of biological impacts for the alternatives with a focus on the North Alternative and biological mitigation by others in its proposed footprint. Representatives of FWS, COE, DFG attended, and EPA and FHWA attended via teleconference. No changes in the alternatives under study were suggested.
- February 25, 1999 – discussion with EPA, confirming EPA's concurrence with the range of alternatives and the purpose and need.

NEPA – SECTION 404 CONCURRENT PROCESS

The project has followed the guidance established in the NEPA – Section 404 Memorandum of Understanding between Caltrans, FHWA and the federal resource and regulatory agencies. Three agencies have participated as NEPA – 404 agreement agencies during development of the Route 905 project:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

On April 27, 1998 Caltrans formally requested the agencies' concurrence on four principal issues:

- NEPA purpose and need – the need for the project, and basic project purpose;
- Criteria for alternative selection;
- Project alternatives to be evaluated in the Draft EIS; and
- Participation of each agency, as a Cooperating Agency.

Each of the agencies was provided with information that would help them understand the purpose and need for the project, the criteria that were proposed for evaluating alternatives, and the alternatives that were proposed for consideration in the Draft EIS. By receiving comments and concurrence from these agencies on these issues early in the planning process, selection of a preferred alternative may proceed with less disagreement on basic issues later in the planning process.

Responses from each agency are reproduced in the following pages as [Figure 6-3](#), [Figure 6-4](#) and [Figure 6-5](#). All agencies responded that they concur with the first three issues above, however there was no formal acceptance by EPA or COE to participate as a Cooperating Agency. FWS already had accepted the role of Cooperating Agency in a letter dated May 25, 1995, after the initial invitations to the three agencies were issued on May 5, 1995. Final concurrence from the ACOE on alternatives and wetland delineation was received on March __, 2000.

Concurrence Process Update

In 1995, Caltrans began coordinating with the federal resource agencies, including the FWS, ACOE, EPA, and FHWA to implement the NEPA-404 Integration Process for the Route 905 project. The project's alternatives were developed during meetings with these resource agencies, along with the California Department of Fish and Game, in order to minimize biological resource impacts. Further minimization of impacts to natural resources during the preliminary design phase has occurred. The new revised interim thresholds for the NEPA-404 Integration Process issued by the United States Department of Transportation (October 30, 2000), prompted Caltrans to request the Route 905 Project's withdrawal from the NEPA-404 Integration Process. These interim thresholds stated that projects with impacts of five acres or less to special aquatic sites, or impacts of five acres or less to other waters of the U.S. are no longer required to follow the NEPA-404 Integration Process. The impacts to waters and wetlands for this project have been minimized substantially, through coordination with the resource agencies, and as a result of design modifications. The proposed project impacts are well below the new interim thresholds. Based on this coordination the FWS, EPA, ACOE, and FHWA have concurred with Caltrans' request to withdraw the Route 905 Project from the NEPA-404 Integration Process. Caltrans will continue to work closely with all of the resource agencies to maintain communication and coordination throughout the proposed project's development.

Figure 6-1	Notice of Preparation
Figure 6-2	Notice of Intent
Figure 6-3	Letter from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Figure 6-4	Letter from U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Figure 6-5	Letter from U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Figure 6-6	Letter from Endangered Habitats League